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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR GREG SCHULTE TALKS NONPROLIFERATION IN
SLOVENIA

[11](#). (C) Summary. During a public diplomacy visit to Slovenia October 16 US Ambassador to UNVIE Greg Schulte met with leaders and policymakers from government, media, and academia to talk about nuclear nonproliferation, US policy towards Iran and North Korea, and Slovenia's role as the Chairman of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Board of Governors. All interlocutors, from the Foreign Minister to Slovenian academics, were eager to learn more about the development of nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea, hear the US perspective on Iran, North Korea, and the fate of the nuclear nonproliferation regime in general, and to learn about US government strategy going forward. Schulte's visit attracted excellent coverage in the Slovenian media and succeeded in reminding the host government, key Slovenian opinion makers, and the general public where the USG stands on nuclear nonproliferation and what we see as the best road ahead. End Summary.

[12](#). (C) US Ambassador to UNVIE Greg Schulte visited Slovenia October 16 to meet with leaders and policymakers from government, media, and academia to talk about nuclear nonproliferation, US policy towards Iran and North Korea, and Slovenia's role as the Chairman of the IAEA Board of Governors (BoG). In the meetings Schulte outlined US priorities in the nuclear nonproliferation area including, (1) the likely November IAEA Board of Governors discussion over the suspension of technical cooperation with Iran, (2) the desire to give countries reliable access to nuclear fuel through a fuel bank, and (3) interest in jump-starting the lagging and politicized IAEA committee in charge of nuclear safeguards and technology. He talked about the necessity of Slovenia taking a proactive approach to chairing the BoG, and encouraged the GoS to use its seat on the BoG (apart from its role as Chair of the BoG) for advocacy instead of slipping into a less effective, neutral party role. He also commented on the current state of play in the six party talks regarding North Korea, and the P5 1 talks with Iran.

Senior Level Discourse on Slovenia and the IAEA

[13](#). (C) Schulte and DCM Maryruth Coleman met with a senior level group at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that included Director General for Policy Planning and Multilateral Relations Anita Pipan, Head of the Security Policy Division Stanislav Vidovic, Director of the Slovenian Nuclear Safety Administration Andrej Stritar, and Security Policy Department staffer Bostjan Jerman. Pipan and Schulte largely agreed on priorities for this year at IAEA, with Pipan adding that smooth operation of the board and resolving budget problems were also important. She responded favorably to Schulte's concerns about having strong leadership at the BoG, saying that although the GoS knows the position requires consensus

building and negotiations, Slovenia is a responsible member of the international community and will continue to pursue Slovenian interests and work to avoid a "vague" chairmanship.

Pipan noted that it will be difficult to separate the technical from the political this year at the IAEA, with technical expert Stritar echoing those comments.

¶4. (C) In reference to the ongoing negotiations with Iran, Pipan agreed with Schulte's assessment that the P5 1 incentive package was very generous. She commented that though the doors should remain open for negotiations, time is clearly running out for Iran, and it is time for other types of pressure to be introduced. That said, Pipan responded to Schulte's question about a "strong statement" out of the next EU Foreign Ministers meeting with the discouraging news that he shouldn't expect anything new.

¶5. (C) In reference to the idea of a nuclear fuel bank, Stritar was unsure of what the added value would be, mentioning that Slovenia currently acquires nuclear fuel through a commercial arrangement with an American company and that he felt the market was working. Stritar did, however, express interest if the fuel bank used a "leasing" concept whereby consumer countries could lease the fuel, use it, and then return the spent fuel. He said this would be very interesting for countries like Slovenia, which does not have a permanent repository for spent nuclear fuel and does not think that it is financially viable to create one. COMMENT. Stritar's comments regarding the lack of Slovenian interest in a fuel bank were contrary to what PolMilOff has heard previously from Security Policy Department staffer Bostjan Jerman. Jerman has said in the past that while Slovenia is satisfied with its current situation, the GoS would be interested in the security that a nuclear fuel bank would provide in securing future access to nuclear fuel. END

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COMMENT.

Bringing the GoS Up to Speed on Nuclear Issues

¶6. (C) Schulte, Ambassador Robertson, and DCM Coleman also met with Slovenian Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel. Rupel echoed Pipan's comments about Slovenia's role as IAEA BoG Chairman saying that Slovenia does not have any tasks to add, but will focus on closing out pending issues, and adding that the organizational problems at IAEA somewhat resemble those that Slovenia faced during its Chairmanship-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2005. Rupel said he hoped the stint at IAEA would be a "good opportunity for our diplomats to assert themselves," was confident that Slovenian and US positions would be very close, and said that the GoS will do its utmost to push progress forward. Rupel frequently questioned Ambassador Schulte throughout the 45 minute meeting and was curious about the details of the nuclear fuel bank concept and the US assessment of Iran's progress towards nuclear weapons, saying that IAEA Director General Mohamed El Baradei had said that the Iranian nuclear weapons program was "10 years off."

¶7. (C) Rupel commented on his recent participation in a conference of Mediterranean countries in Greece, saying that the countries would like to have more engagement on Iran but did not know how, and that it would be positive for the European Union to put forward its opinion in a "more forceful way." He said his personal opinion was that "Iran really wants nuclear weapons" and that ultimately "we won't be successful in stopping them." He concluded with a relatively grim commentary on the fact that "Europe still does not have a (coherent) post-9/11 foreign policy as the Americans do" and that "Europe is getting weak." However, he seemed to agree that Slovenia should get smart and become more active on these issues because problems "won't disappear" before Slovenia's 2008 stint in the EU Presidency.

18. (C) Schulte and DCM Coleman met with International Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister Andrej Rahten as well, with comments from both sides echoing those from the earlier MFA meetings, and Rahten using the meeting to get Schulte's insider overview of the current situation at IAEA and with the Iranian and North Korean efforts. As in his previous meetings, Schulte praised Slovenian IAEA Ambassador Ernst Petric as an excellent interlocutor and said the US will be working closely with him to obtain a Board decision to suspend IAEA technical cooperation with Iran. Rahten emphasized that Iran must not be able to use multilateral procedures to postpone decisions and that maintaining multilateral consensus is the best option for success.

Slovenian Civil Society Eager to Discuss Nuclear
Non-Proliferation

19. (C) Schulte's public diplomacy outreach included meeting with groups of Slovenian non-governmental leaders at a roundtable hosted by the Institute for Strategic Studies and a dinner with four of Slovenia's leading academics. The questions and comments were consistent with those raised in government meetings, with the focus being on the current state of relations between the US and both North Korea and Iran, assessments of those countries' progress toward acquiring nuclear weapons, and what likely next-steps are for the US in dealing with both countries. Roundtable participants also inquired about Chinese and Russian participation in negotiations with Iran and North Korea, the future of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the usefulness of sanctions, and current US policy towards India and Pakistan. The academics (one of whom has traveled several times to Iran) largely agreed with Schulte's points, particularly regarding the need for multilateral cooperation, though some suggested that it would be helpful for the US to engage bilaterally with Iran and North Korea. They also thought it was important that the Iran situation be viewed in the context of Iraq and the stalled Middle East peace talks, and to consider that a hard US line toward Iran would turn many young Iranians off - youth who currently have a positive image of the US.

Taking on the Slovenian Press...and Challenging Assumptions

110. (C) Schulte sat for interviews with leading national

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newspaper Dnevnik (170,000 readers) and state television station TV Slovenia. The question and answer interview in Dnevnik allowed Schulte to reject perceptions that the US is undermining the NPT by treating North Korea and Iran differently than India, Pakistan, and Israel. The subtitle of the article, "We want to Strengthen the Non-Proliferation Regime," countered the argument the journalist had made the previous week that "another nail had been driven into the coffin of the half-dead agreement." Schulte also pointed to the decision of Slovenia to pursue its civilian nuclear energy program by acquiring nuclear fuel on the world market as a model that others should follow. He emphasized President Bush's and Mohamed El Baradei's reference to a loophole in the NPT and described the potential for abuse under the NPT's right to pursue a nuclear production cycle for peaceful purposes. TV Slovenia briefly covered his meeting with Foreign Minister Rupel during its main newscast on October 16 and broadcast the interview during its late evening "60 Minutes"-style news show "Odmevi" on October 17. The "Odmevi" interview carried a similar theme on the importance of strengthening the NPT, working together with our allies on sanctions, and explaining the different nature of the danger coming from the Iranian and North Korean regimes as compared to other non-signatories of the NPT.

¶11. (C) Comment. Though small, Slovenia continues to pursue ways to engage and contribute to the international community, particularly through organizational leadership roles like this year's efforts in Chairing the IAEA Board of Governors. The great interest we saw at the MFA, particularly from Foreign Minister Rupel, to better understand the Iranian and North Korean nuclear issues indicates that Slovenia has its eyes on an international role that is larger than its small size might naturally dictate. All interlocutors, from the Foreign Minister to Slovenian academics, were eager to learn more about the development of nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea, hear the US perspective of these events and the nuclear nonproliferation regime in general, and to hear about the US government strategy going forward. Taking time to engage the GoS on these issues today will go great lengths to building cooperation when Slovenia holds the EU Presidency in ¶2008. Schulte's visit successfully reminded the host government where the US stands on nuclear nonproliferation, what we see as the path forward, and that we want Slovenia to be part of the solution. End Comment.

Embassy Ljubljana thanks Ambassador Schulte for making the visit.
ROBERTSON